



Morning Alert - Monday, August 20, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports on powerful Typhoon Soulik, which is expected to approach the area south of Kyushu tomorrow morning, and Typhoon Cimaron, which developed on Saturday and is expected to affect western and eastern Japan later this week. TBS, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with reports that two men were arrested yesterday for abandoning the body of an Osaka woman in Kakogawa.

Major front-page items in national papers included a report on difficulties collecting corporate tax from Amazon and other foreign IT firms, a GOJ study on utilizing artificial intelligence to detect unidentified ships, and the LDP's decision to hold its presidential election on Sept. 20.

INTERNATIONAL

National security advisor reportedly reveals DPRK agreed to denuclearize within a year

NHK reported this morning that White House National Security Advisor Bolton said on ABC TV on Sunday that during the inter-Korean summit in April, when South Korean President Moon told Chairman Kim that North Korea will be able to receive assistance or investment from Japan and South Korea if it swiftly denuclearizes, Kim expressed his intention to achieve denuclearization within a year. Bolton was shown saying on ABC: "President Moon said, 'Let's get this done in a year.' Kim Jong Un said, 'Yes.'" Claiming that the U.S.-DPRK talks are facing difficulties, the network speculated the U.S. is trying to push North Korea to take action by disclosing that Chairman Kim agreed to denuclearize in a short

period of time.

Ambassador Harris meets with senior DPRK diplomat

Saturday morning's Asahi reported on the disclosure by a source involved in U.S.-DPRK relations that U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Harris held talks with the North Korean vice foreign minister at the DMZ on Aug. 12 apparently at the request of the Kim regime. The paper claimed that Pyongyang is desperate to achieve a breakthrough in bilateral relations ahead of the 70th anniversary of the foundation of the DPRK on Sept. 9 to highlight Chairman Kim's diplomatic accomplishments. The daily speculated, however, that the two sides probably remained at odds because the U.S. official reportedly dismissed Pyongyang's call for a declaration to end the Korean War by insisting that a timeline for denuclearization be submitted first.

Chinese President Xi likely to visit DPRK next month

Sunday's Nikkei took up the disclosure by several sources involved in Sino-North Korean relations that Chinese President Xi is likely to visit Pyongyang in September, speculating that he may attend a ceremony to mark the 70th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK to call attention to China's status as the reclusive regime's "guardian."

U.S., Chinese leaders likely to meet in November to ease trade friction

All papers reported over the weekend on a Wall Street Journal story claiming that arrangements are underway for President Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi to hold a meeting in November to discuss the escalated trade friction between their two nations. The proposed summit, which is reportedly intended to set forth a roadmap for easing the trade friction, could take place either on the margins of the APEC leaders' meeting in Papua New Guinea or on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Argentina.

U. S. alarmed by China's rapid arms buildup

All Saturday morning papers except Asahi took up the annual defense report released by the Pentagon on Friday, highlighting its prediction that China will continue to modernize its armed forces rapidly, including increasing its marine corps from the present 10,000 to about 30,000 by 2020. According to the papers, the projected augmentation is probably intended to beef up China's naval presence in the vicinity of the Senkakus and the Taiwan Strait. Yomiuri expressed concern that America's overwhelming military supremacy in the Asia-Pacific region is being undercut by the Chinese, adding that Japan needs to strengthen its defense partnership with Washington to curb and deter the PLA's aggressive operations in the East China Sea.

American governors to meet with Japanese counterparts in Tokyo

Sunday's Yomiuri reported that the governors of Kentucky, Nevada, and other states will visit Tokyo from Aug. 26 through 28 to meet with Japanese governors, saying that this will be the first such conference in 23 years. The U.S. governors are likely to pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Abe. The Japanese side is hoping to build a relationship of trust with U.S. local political leaders in view of the Trump administration's tough policy on trade based on the assessment that some American governors, particularly from agricultural states, are hoping that the U.S. will return to the TPP.

Japan keen to export patrol plane technology to France, Germany

Monday's Nikkei front-paged a report claiming that the GOJ is holding discussions with the French and German governments on possible cooperation with their plan to jointly develop a new patrol plane to monitor Russian submarines. They are reportedly interested in Japan's P-1 maritime patrol aircraft. Although Japan is aiming to export the planes themselves, France and Germany would reportedly prefer to import the technology and components. The GOJ may pursue the possibility of trilateral joint development.

Defense chief to visit India, Sri Lanka

Today's Nikkei wrote that Defense Minister Onodera left for India and Sri Lanka yesterday to deepen security cooperation with the two countries in line with Prime Minister Abe's "free and open" Indo-Pacific initiative. While in India, the Japanese minister is likely to forge a consensus with his counterpart on increasing training drills between the two nations' air forces and armies. The two sides also plan to confirm a plan to jointly study the development of ground-based unmanned vehicles. Onodera is also expected to meet with the Sri Lankan president and offer cooperation to help strengthen its navy.

Japan looking to expand trade with Russia via Trans-Siberian Railway

Saturday morning's Yomiuri gave top play to the Abe administration's plan to utilize the Trans-Siberian Railway to transport cargo between Japan and Russia. The paper said that a test shipment using the trans-continental railway will be conducted next month to see whether land-based transportation would be a viable option in addition to the existing sea and air routes. The GOJ is reportedly hoping that exploring an alternative method of transportation would be conducive to building confidence with Moscow toward resolution of the Northern Territories dispute.

Foreign Minister Kono meets with incoming Mexican leader

Sunday's Yomiuri reported that Foreign Minister Kono visited Mexico City on Saturday and held talks with President-elect López Obrador and confirmed mutual coordination for the early effectuation of the TPP. The Japanese minister reportedly asked the incoming Mexican leader to protect Japanese business interests there in the ongoing NAFTA renegotiation with the U.S. and Canada since Mexico hosts the largest number of Japanese companies in Latin America.

Meanwhile, today's Nikkei spotlighted Kono's Latin American trip that has taken him to Colombia, Peru, and Chile in addition to Mexico, explaining that the Japanese minister agreed with his counterparts to promote free trade with the goal of countering what the paper described as the Trump administration's inclination toward trade protectionism. Noting that all of these nations are members of the Pacific Alliance, a Latin American free trade bloc, the daily said Japan is anxious to build ties with the alliance members.

SECURITY

Governor Onaga allegedly named two people as his possible successor

All Sunday papers reported that the late Okinawa Governor Onaga mentioned locally elected Diet member Tamaki and Kanehide Group Chairman Goya as possible candidates to succeed him just a few days before he passed away on Aug. 8. According to the articles, Onaga's family has in its possession a recording of the late governor's dying message. The parliamentarian and local business leader have reportedly ruled out the possibility of running in the September by-election to pick the new Okinawa

leader.

However, today's papers reported that the "All Okinawa" coalition that supported Onaga's anti-FRF campaign has decided to ask Tamaki, who is secretary general of the Liberal Party, to run in the gubernatorial election. He will reportedly make a decision on whether or not to seek the governorship this week. If the politician chooses to run, he will face off with former Ginowan Mayor Sakima, who stepped down from his post last week to run in the gubernatorial race. According to the dailies, a special Ginowan mayoral election to pick Sakima's successor will be held on Sept. 30, the same day as the gubernatorial by-election.

GOJ to seek compensation if Henoko landfill permit revoked

Monday's Mainichi front-paged a GOJ estimate that it will have to pay some 20 million yen in additional costs per day if the Okinawa prefectural government withdraws the landfill permit for FRF construction as envisaged because the landfill work will then have to be suspended or postponed, resulting in extra costs for hiring workers and renting equipment. In the event that the permit is rescinded, the GOJ will take the case to the court and a ruling probably will not be handed down for several weeks. The central government is likely to separately ask the court to order the prefectural government to pay compensation for the extra costs accrued.

GSDF to launch cyberwarfare unit in Kyushu

Mainichi reported today that the Defense Ministry has decided to set up within the Western Army next March a unit tasked with safeguarding the GSDF's telecommunications networks from cyberattacks. The 40-member unit will be responsible for protecting SDF computer networks on remote Kyushu and Okinawa islands, which are reportedly vulnerable to cyberattacks.

GOJ to use AI to detect suspicious ships

Monday's Yomiuri led with a report saying that the GOJ has launched an initiative to use artificial intelligence to detect unidentified vessels around Japan with the goal of launching trials in FY2021. The central government has reportedly decided to tap artificial intelligence since existing radar systems have not been adequate to detect and prevent suspicious operations at sea, such as the "ship-to-ship" transfer of sanctioned items involving North Korea. The Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency reportedly signed a contract with Hitachi in June to develop such AI expertise.

ECONOMY

Japan's trade policy being tested in talks with U.S.

Sunday's Sankei pointed out the absence of a centralized trade organization within the Japanese government, noting that unlike the USTR, which has been granted centralized authority in trade talks, several GOJ ministries are accountable for negotiating trade deals with foreign governments. The daily explained that the TPP headquarters at the Kantei is responsible for the TPP, MOFA is in charge of the Japan-EU EPA, and METI is tasked with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) initiative. Noting that calls had emerged within the GOJ at one point for establishing a Japanese version of the USTR, the daily said some GOJ officials are negative toward the idea. While crediting the TPP headquarters with successfully completing the tough TPP-11 talks, the papers added that its viability will be tested again when negotiating with the USTR for a "free, fair, and reciprocal" trade deal.

POLITICS

Ishiba criticizes Abe for pushing to revise Article 9

All Saturday morning papers took up a press conference on Friday by former LDP Secretary General Ishiba, during which he took issue with Prime Minister Abe's eagerness to submit to the Diet session in the fall an LDP proposal on adding a provision to Article 9 of the Constitution to make the existence of the SDF explicit. Ishiba, who plans to challenge the premier in the September LDP presidential race, criticized him for actively pursuing an idea that "lacks urgency." Ishiba stressed that a national consensus has yet to be forged for amending the war-renouncing clause, adding that when it comes to constitutional revision, higher priority should be given to drawing up a provision that would give the central government special authority in dealing with natural disasters and other emergencies.

Meanwhile, today's Sankei claimed that the ruling LDP has informally decided to hold the presidential election on Sept. 20, adding that PM Abe is set to officially announce his plan to seek a third term later this month.

